

Final report

Intergovernmental Conference on Cultural Policies for Development

Stockholm, Sweden, 30 March - 2 April 1998



5. THE AGORA SESSIONS



100. Conceived as an open space for exchange and discussion, the *Agora* component of the Conference was organized by IGOs, NGOs, foundations and national cultural institutions. The *Agora* sessions brought together over 350 panellists from around the world to present diverse views and opinions from all regions. It provided a platform for creative and original debate among and within civil society organizations and yielded fruitful results in the form of joint projects and initiatives. The range of topics discussed was very varied. Ten main strands emerge as key concerns: multiculturalism and the practice of cultural diversity; the cultural role of civil society; creativity in the new global scenario; freedom of expression and the silenced voices of journalists and artists; other silent voices : women, children, and indigenous peoples; new research agendas; public service and the old and the new media; public cultural institutions such as libraries and archives; international initiatives and forms of cultural expression of local interest groups; towns and cities spaces for cultural practice, innovation and analysis.
101. The summary reports reproduced below were provided by the respective organizers; hence the diversity of styles and reporting methods employed. The reports are presented in the order of the sessions as announced in the conference programme.

Visions of African Cultural Co-operation and Development

102. Organized by the Oxford Secretariat of the Bellagio Publishing Network on behalf of Ubuntu 2000, and with the participation of many experts from Africa and the Diaspora, this two and a half day seminar took as its starting point the results of the Pan-African Consultative Meeting on Cultural Cooperation and Development: Agenda for the Next Millennium (Lomé, Togo, 10-13 February 1998). Each of the ten sub-sessions discussed key issues in a wide range of cultural industries, with the accent on practical proposals for future action. The main objective was the presentation of a plan of action for fulfilling the objectives for development and cultural empowerment for Africa and the Diaspora proposed by the Ubuntu 2000 movement, a new non-political, Pan-African and international initiative for cultural co-operation and development. The seminar was funded by SIDA, the Rockefeller Foundation and the Ford Foundation.
103. The session "Crossing the Threshold" briefly revisited the issues of the Lomé Conference, which addressed the challenges of cultural policies for development, and introduced the Ubuntu Movement as an African response to counter the effects of globalization. Panellists included Mr Gaston Beyina-Gbandi, (Minister of Tourism, Arts and Culture, Central African Republic), Dr Damien Pwono (the Rockefeller Foundation), Mr Lupwishi Mbuyamba (UNESCO Cultural Adviser for East, Central and Southern Africa), and Mr Guy Huot (Secretary-General, International Council of Music). In the session on "Recasting Cultural Policies" the panellists were Ms Pumla Madiba (Head of Sport, Recreation and Culture, Gauteng Provincial Government, South Africa), Mr Mervyn Claxton (social science researcher/writer, Jamaica/Paris), Ms Aminata Traoré (Minister of Culture, Mali), Jacques D'Adesky (Co-ordinator, Centro de Estudos das Americas, Brazil). They all asked hard questions about the pertinence and feasibility of cultural development in Africa in light of the harsh realities of today

and the eroded historical consciousness resulting from colonialism which has caused marginalization and lack of cultural confidence among the peoples of the continent.

104. Respectively entitled "Publishing and Development" and "Media and New Technologies", the third and fourth sessions discussed the urgent need to develop literacy, written and visual as a key to mobilisation of economic, political, cultural and social life in Africa. Panellists Chief Victor Nwankwo (Managing Director, Fourth Dimension Publishers, Nigeria), Ms Gillian Nyambura (Executive Secretary, African Publishers Network), Mr James Tumusiime (Vice-Chairperson, African Publishers Network), Mary Jay (African Books Collective Ltd) and M Hamidou Konaté (Treasurer, African Publishers network) analysed the challenges faced by African publishers and outlined strategies to tackle the long-standing, fundamental problems of illiteracy, poor infrastructures, weak professional networks, declining economies and poor consumer habits. As they are all interrelated, a negative synergy has been created which has thwarted efforts to bring about change. Solutions which call on the political will of governments to continue emphasis on education as a means to eradicate illiteracy; the creation of meaningful partnerships along Southern axes e.g. inter-African, Africa and the Diaspora and North/South nations were proposed.

105. Panellists Ms Jeanette Minnie (Executive Director, Media Institute for Southern Africa), Mr Atsen Ahua (Executive Director, Synergies Africana Ventures), Professor Mbye Cham (Howard University) and Mr Anicet Bongo (Manager, BANF Consulting) discussed the financial and distribution hardships confronted by filmmakers, and underscored the need for cultural connectivity on the continent. Disseminating knowledge and traversing psychological, economic and linguistic barriers, self and otherwise imposed, were among the concerns expressed, which converged on this key idea: "Cultural capital is not a luxury any more than investment capital".

106. With the participation of Mr Ibrahim Salahi (painter, Sudan), Mr Okwui Enwezor (Editor, Nkaa Journal of Contemporary Art), Professor Salah Hassan (Cornell University), Anna Getaneh and Ms Els van der Plas (Prince Claus Fund for Culture and Development), "The Visual Arts" session focused on the language of the visual arts and the transition Africa makes into the post-modern era. As the African renaissance emerges, transfers of knowledge, the creation, presentation, and documentation of African visual arts, be it in the plastic arts or fashion must redress the imbalance of power that has created gaps in our histories and the histories of artistic production in the world at large.

- 107 Ms Anita Theorell (SIDA), Dr George Abungu (Regional Director, National Museums of Kenya), Elisabet Olofsson (Co-ordinator, Swedish African Museum Programme), Mr Alexis Adande (Executive Director, West African Museums Program) and Ms Tickey Pule (Director, National Museum, Botswana) developed the topic of "Museums and Society" and highlighted the multifaceted dilemma African museums continue to face as a direct result of the imposition of a museum culture. What is the museum? Who does it serve? And, perhaps more importantly, how it should serve Africa? Museums are historically alien to the cultures of the continent and their post-colonial definition is constraining, yet they are the same venues which serve as the much needed cultural reservoirs for research, documentation and conservation and presentation of Africa's cultures past, present and future.

108. Two interactive sessions followed, with audience and presenters momentarily singing

and dancing during the "Performing Arts" session. The creative processes of theatre, dance and music illustrated how they can provide Africa with new possibilities for transferring knowledge and enriching African peoples and others spiritually. But what of enriching Africans economically? Panellists included Professor Penina Mlama (Chief Executive Officer, University of Dar es Salaam), Dr Paul Kavyu (Chairman, Permanent Presidential Music Commission of Kenya), Mr Hassan El-Geretly (Director, El-Warsha Theatre Group, Cairo), Mr Godwin Kaduma (writer/choreographer, Tanzania Theatre Centre), Professor Tess Onwueme (University of Wisconsin). A surprisingly revealing survey on language conducted by Professor Kale Omotoso (University of the Western Cape) during the "Arts and Humanities Capacity Building" session led to the question as to how indigenous traditional and contemporary intellectual properties can be protected in the extraordinarily large "public domain" of the world arena. Mr Achille Mbembe (Executive Secretary, CODESRIA), Professor Kwabena Nketia (Director, International Centre for Music and Dance, Ghana), Mr Ruy Cesar Silva (Director, Casa Via Magia, Brazil) and Professor Ndaywel e Nziem (University of Kinshasa) completed this panel. The penultimate session "Privatisation of Culture", examined the complex and sometimes paradoxical relationship between new economic models and sponsorship of the arts, and the Ubuntu Movement's strength in the partnerships it creates, with panellists Mr Tomas Ybarra-Frausto (the Rockefeller Foundation), Dr Wally Serote (Chairman, Arts, Culture, Language, Science and Technology, Government of South Africa), Mr Methaetsile Leepile (Manager, Southern Africa Media Development Fund), Mr Christopher Till (Acting Executive Director, Ubuntu 2000) and Mr Akunu Dake, Director, Panafest Secretariat). Mr Philip Sawadogo (Ambassador of Burkina Faso to France) chaired the final session on "Cultural Co-operation". Mr Marcel Diouf (OAU Senior Cultural Adviser) urged urgent restructuring of the African Fund for the Promotion of Culture. Other panellists Dr Maria Elisa Velasquez-Gutierrez (Researcher, Mexico National Institute of Anthropology and History), Mr Antonio Pitanga (Municipal Councillor, Rio de Janeiro) and Ms Annick Thebia-Melsan (UNESCO) tackled diasporic relations and cultural exchange, key issues in the new Pan-African Ubuntu movement. Something new is emerging in Africa, culturally, intellectually and ethically. Ubuntu represents the opening of a new epoch of dreams married with practicality.

Archives for Culture and Democracy

109. Organized by the International Council for Archives (ICA), this session discussed the role of archives in sustaining democracy and the respect for cultural heritage. Six experts presented current views on the issue: Joan van Albada (City Archivist, Dordrecht, The Netherlands and Chair of the ICA Sub-Commission for Communication), introduced the question of archives and cultural pluralism, i.e. how the written cultural heritage could be made available to underprivileged states and groups. Patricia Galeana (Director General, National Archives, Mexico, and member of the Executive Committee of ICA), showed from her own experience how archives reflect both the government apparatus and the people, and gave arguments why good archival practice is a guarantee for democracy. Shen Lihua (Deputy Director, State Archives Bureau, China and member of the ICA Sub-Commission for Communication), showed that archives are in a dynamic stage of development and that ICA in cooperation with UNESCO and other organizations are in the forefront. Björn Lindh (Director, National Archives of Sweden, and Vice President of the ICA Commission on Archival Development), described the geographical organization of ICA and its activities in assisting the developing world on archival issues. Musila Mussembe (Director General, National Archives, Kenya), argued that since archives are in permanent danger, cultural pluralism and democracy are also endangered in consequence. For her, the main threats are governments which do not understand in archives, bad climate, accidents and indifference. Finally, the session moderator